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ABSTRACT

An Old Order Mennonite one-room school in Pennsylvania was selected for this case study, which describes the building, curriculum, methods of instruction in reading, students and teacher. The study conducted interviews of school and community members together with modification of Flander's (1974) interaction analysis to collect quantitative verbal interaction data. It also used modification of a 1984 observation system described by Cooper (1984) to collect time-on-task behavior of the students. The study found that the students spent most of their time working on individual assignments and that the Mennonite heritage permeated the school. This heritage stresses literacy and the need for hard work as life skills. The teacher taught as she was taught in the historic tradition of the one-room school. The study includes list of the school's daily schedule, text, curriculum, classroom behaviors, attendance record, survey questions, floor plan and 14 references. (Author/TES)

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Case Study of an Old Order Mennonite One-room School

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The authors gratefully acknowledge the teacher, children, parents, church members, and bishop associated with this school, without whose cooperation this case study would have not been possible.

A paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, April 9, 1988

Running Head: MENNONITE ONE-ROOM SCHOOL

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Abstract

An Old Order Mennonite one-room school in Pennsylvania was selected for a case study designed to describe the building, curriculum, reading instruction, students, teacher, and teaching methods. Interviews of parents, students, teacher, and church bishop were employed to answer questions of interest. Other individuals having contact with the school were also interviewed. A modification of Flander's (1974) interaction analysis was used to collect quantitative verbal interaction data. A modification of an observation system described by Cooper (1984) was used to collect time-on-task behavior of the students. It was found that the students spend most of their time working on individual assignments and that the Mennonite heritage permeates the school. This heritage stresses importance of literacy and the necessity of hard work as life skills. The teacher teaches as she was taught in the historic tradition of the one-room community school.

Case Study of an Old Order Mennonite One-room School

This case study was designed to describe the building, curriculum, students, teacher, and teaching methods of an Old Order Mennonite one-room school in Pennsylvania. More specifically, the researchers collected data relevant to the teaching of reading, student time on task, and the role of the community in the operation of this school.

This case study is important because during the 1986-87 school year there were approximately 600 Amish and 150 Old Order Mennonite one-room schools in operation in the U.S. Since 1960 the number of these private Mennonite and Amish one-room schools has increased by about 20 new schools per year (Blackboard Bulletin, 1986). Furthermore, this study is also significant in light of the fact that previous writers such as Hostetler and Huntington (1971) and Fisher and Stahl (1986) have centered on a depiction of Amish education. While the Old Order Mennonite and Amish cultures share a common heritage, a description of an Old Order Mennonite school will lead to a better understanding of their educational system and society. Finally, the study is important because by studying this school, the researchers are actually recording techniques of instruction typical of the one-room school of our heritage, because the teachers of these schools teach as they were taught.

Historical Background and Cultural Characteristics

Because the Old Order Mennonite groups are steeped in tradition, a case study of one of their schools would be incomplete without an overview of their history and group characteristics. The origins of the Old Order Mennonites can be traced to 16th century Europe, which was a time of upheavel for the Christian Church. Martin Luther's stand, which began the Reformation in 1514, also led to the development of the Anabaptist movement against the Roman Catholic Church in Switzerland. The Swiss Anabaptists were formed in the early 1520's and at the same time the Netherlands was the scene of a similar revolt spurred on by the writings of Menno Simons. This led to the formation of the Dutch Mennonites who were the forefathers of the Old Order Mennonites of 1988 (Wenger, 1977).

In order to escape religious persecution, a group of the Dutch Mennonites came to America at the invitation of William Penn. Penn granted 18,000 acres to the group in 1683 on the condition that they establish a colony. Around this time in southern Germany, Jacob Ammann disagreed with several practices of the Dutch Mennonite group and broke away, forming the Amish in 1693. The Amish began immigrating to America in the 1720's (Dyck, 1981).

Although the original Mennonite settlement was made at Germantown, Pennsylvania in 1683, they soon branched out and settled the area which is now Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. This area became a haven for the Mennonites as well as other persecuted religious groups from Europe (Dyck, 1981).

The Mennonites, who preferred isolation, non-violence, and who wished to avoid conflict, were forced by the harsh environment to take a stand against slavery and the killing of Native Americans. By the mid 1700's they were pushing their way west in an effort to found settlements where they could form and maintain isolation from the commercialization of the Lancaster area (Dyck, 1981).

This movement was responsible for the settlement of Snyder County, Pennsylavania. The school which was the focus of this study is located in this area. There are currently eight old order churches in this community and although there is some overlap due to geographic location, basically each church has a school which provides education for the children. There are a few families however, who send their children to public schools through eighth grade.

Children are very important to the Old Order Mennonite family because they are believed to be gifts from God. The children are dressed as replicas of the parents and by the age of five have assumed some of the responsibilities around the home. An Old Order Mennonite home in Pennsylvania averages eight children. The mother is the caretaker of the home and children; the father is the head of the household. Pennsylvannia Dutch is the language spoken in the home, but by the time the children are school age they are well on their way to being tri-lingual. English is spoken at school and in the market place and high or formal German is used for prayers and religious services.

Children begin school around the age of six and complete school at the end of eighth grade. After completion of eighth

grade, girls stay home to help their mothers and the boys stay home and work with their fathers, sometimes learning a trade such as masonry, leather work, or carpentry during the winter months.

It is not until they reach the age of 18-21 that they join the church and marry. These rites usually occur around the same time. The parents support the new couple by providing land and sometimes the home in which they begin married life.

Farming, the major occupation of these people, is based on the historic tradition presented in Genesis 3:23. They believe that God has sent them forth to till the land. As a people they are firm in their convictions, honest in their intent, and loyal to their historic beliefs; however, the difficulties arise in trying to honor the laws of a rapidly growing industrial nation, and still maintain their separateness.

Several threats to Old Order communities and individual families originate from laws designed to serve this country. These threats include: 1) consolidation of schools, 2) lengthening the time period of compulsory school attendance, and 3) compulsory welfare systems. There are also informal threats, such as easy access to automobiles, television, and radios (Hostetler, 1980).

The attitude of the Old Order Mennonites toward government is very much the same as that of their Anabaptist forefathers. They acknowledge the necessity of government, but do place limitations on the authority of the state. The state does not control the spiritual realm and it has no right to promote religious uniformity or suppress dissent. Furthermore, the state has

nothing to do with the individual's relationship or responsibility to God.

The Old Order Mennonites do not run for public office, nor do they believe in political activity that requires force, which they feel violates the higher law of Christian love. They do not use courts to settle disputes and their church rules forbid them to take an oath, serve on juries, or collect debts by using the courts. It is important to note, however, that when their conscience is violated they will take a stand. Historically, their stand has promoted religious freedom in this country.

The school controversy did not begin until well into the twentieth century. It was brought into the open by school consolidation and the extension of compulsory attendance beyond the elementary grades. The Old Order groups, both Mennonite and Amish, feared what was being taught to their children by teachers they did not know, in large schools a considerable distance from their homes and communitites. Bussing their children away from their home was a threat to their society.

The Old Order Community finds cultural isolation important for the development and maturity of the adolescent. This is the time when most parents decrease their control, but also the time before the young person has joined the church. Consequently, the community has not yet assumed the control that church membership brings. It is important that in this stage of their lives the young people identify with the Old Order Community and not with the values of the world. Thus, attendance at a public school beyond grade eight is a threat to the existence of the Old Order communities.

Old Order families also need their adolescents more than the average American household, because they complete many tasks for their parents. Through identification with the parents and the community, the adolescent establishes a commitment to the community. To disrupt this bonding process is a threat not only to the Old Order family, but also to the future of the religious community.

The issues were first confronted in Pennsylvania in 1937, when a large consolidated school supported by federal funds was planned for Lancaster County, Pennsylvania (Hostetler, 1980). It did not affect Snyder County schools until 1951. Although a battle erupted in Lancaster County which involved the imprisonment of parents and eventually legitimized the compromise plan of the Amish vocational schools, Snyder County public school authorities resolved the differences by allowing Old Order Mennonite leaders to form their own schools. These schools were required to meet the state standards of 1) teaching in English, 2) meeting 180 days each year, 3) submitting an attendance report, and 4) the offering of federal monies which were never taken. The state allowed children engaged in farm work to apply for a permit that would excuse them from mandatory school attendance when they reached the age of fifteen.

It was not until 1972 that the United States Supreme Court granted the Old Order religious groups the right to limit formal education to eight grades in the Wisconsin v. Yoder decision. The case was brought to court on behalf of the Old Order groups by a committee of concerned citizens. The Supreme Court held that

the First and Fourteenth amendements prevented the states from compelling the Amish to attend formal high school through the age of sixteen. Chief Justice Warren Burger wrote, "Amish objection to formal education beyond the eighth grade is firmly grounded in central religious beliefs. They object to the high school and higher education generally because the values it teaches are in marked variances with Amish values." (Wisconsin v. Yoder, 1972)

The victory was a significant one because it gave the Amish and Old Order Mennonites protection to maintain their own schools. One issue, however, that remains a problem in several states is the issue of teacher certification.

Method

Design

As Yin (1984) has indicated, the case study is the preferred strategy when the focus is on a contemporary phenomena and when the researcher has no control over the events which take place. Thus, case study methodology was the research design for this study. It was initially determined that to answer the questions of interest the researchers would employ classroom observation, and interviews of parents, students, teacher, and the bishop of the church which organized the school. The names of the school, individuals, and actual location of the school will remain annonymous out of respect for the community and its religious beliefs. One of which is that by using individual's names unnecessary attention would be drawn to them as individuals and discredit their emphasis on the group.

The original design included the use of Flanders' (1974)

interaction analysis to record student and teacher verbal behavior, and qualitative observation to record student and teacher behavior in the classroom. This design was modified after the first observation to include the use of a system to record time-on-task behavior of the students and to collect attendance data. As the project progressed, the researchers included interviews of other individuals with contact with this school. These individuals included the superintendent, nurse, and attendance officer of the local public schools.

Procedure

The researchers observed in this school on the following dates in 1987: May 1, September 25, October 22, December 11, December 22, and December 31; and on January 6 and 20, 1988. During these observations the researchers observed student and teacher behaviors, and collected both quantitative and qualitative data concerning curriculum and instruction. A modification of Flanders' (1974) interaction analysis was used to collect quantitative data concerning the verbal interaction between the teacher and students. This system was used to record behavior on five different days for six different subjects. A modification of an observation system described by Cooper (1984) was utilized to collect quantitative time-on-task behavior of the students. This observation system was used on six days for each subject in the curriculum.

Researchers also interviewed the teacher during recess of some of the visits, the bishop of the church which sponsors the school in May and December of 1987, six of the parents in December of 1987, and ten of the students on December 10. The

researchers asked the students seven questions which are listed in Table 8, while Table 9 indicates the questions answered by the parents. Additional questions were used as the discussion warrented. A content analysis of the notes from these interviews was then conducted. It should be noted here that out of respect for the beliefs of this community, the researchers did not use any modern devices such as tape recorders or cameras to record interviews or classroom interaction.

Rigor was incorporated into this case study in four ways: triangulation, peer debriefing, member checks, and prolonged engagement. Student interviews, parent interviews and classroom observation served as triangulation of the data obtained from each source. Interviews of the local public superintendent, school nurse, and attendance officer also served as triangulation for the data obtained. Peer debriefing occurred as the researchers shared the observations with colleagues. Member checks were evident when the researchers returned to interviewees to confirm or follow-up on questions of interest. Prolonged engagement was evident because one of the researchers has been conducting research in this community for over ten years. The final member checks occurred when the teacher and the bishop reviewed a draft of this case study.

Results

The one-room school in this study is similar in both structure and instruction to that of the public one-room schools in the U.S. in the early 1900's. The building, which is heated by a wood stove, has unpainted wooden floors, single pane windows,

hooks on the wall on which to hang coats, and an unheated porch to place boots and lunches. The classroom has four rows of desks facing the front of the room and the teacher's desk. (see figure 1 for floorplan) The desks are arranged so that each grade sits in the same area. These old wooden desks have an inkwell, which is not used as such. The desks are nailed to rails on the floor. Because of the beliefs of the Mennonite's who attend this school, the school has no electricity, fancy instructional materials, or running water. Thus, there are outhouses several yards from the school. The teaching materials used are especially designed for the Mennonite and Amish schools in the U.S. and Canada. These materials are printed in black and white and are devoid of the colorful pictures found in modern textbooks. The teacher works with eight grades of students.

Student art work is usually displayed on the walls of the classroom along with rules and Bible verses. Holiday decorations are seldom present. For example, at Halloween there were no decorations pertaining to this day. At Christmas, the only decorations were a few simple paper chains which were not put up until a few days before Christmas. The students, however, worked on cards and bookmarks to exchange the day before Christmas.

The teacher of the school is an unmarried woman twenty-nine years of age. During the week she stays with a married sister near the school and on most days she drives her horse and buggy to work. On Fridays she travels to her home approximately ten miles away which she shares with an unmarried sister.

Her attire follows the custom of the Old Order Mennonite

groups who believe that one's convictions should be reflected in one's life. Therefore, she wears a tied head covering, and a dark colored dress, with a full shirt, long sleeves, high neck, cape in front and a back bodice.

The children from Old Order homes are dressed as the adults. The girls wear dark dresses with hair uncut and pulled back into a bun or braided and covered with a prayer covering or bonnet. The boys wear dark pants with white or plain colored shirts and suspenders. During the warm months of the year they wear straw hats; dark broad rimmed hats are worn in the winter.

Schedule

The school year begins about September 1 and continues until about May 5. School is held Monday through Friday and there are very few vacation days. Students are off the Thursday and Friday of Thanksgiving. There is no school on Christmas day, however if Christmas is on a Thursday, the school may have off that Friday also. Students attend school on January 1 and do not have a vacation for Easter or national holidays.

The school day begins at about 8:00 and continues until 2:30. The students have three recess periods. One at 9:30, one after lunch, and one at 1:30. During recess all the students, boys and girls from grades 1-8, play together. The teacher feels that this is important and will enforce the rule as needed, however we did not notice any reason for this to occur. On warmer days the students like to play kick the can and baseball. In the winter months, they go sledding in the pasture across the road or skate on the pond. Also, students usually have a snack at each of the morning and afternoon recesses. If it is raining or very

cold, students play games indoors. Favorite indoor activities are playing the card game Uno, writing on the chalkboard, and helping the teacher.

At lunch time the students are dismissed a grade at a time to retrieve their lunch buckets from the porch. One child is usually in charge of filling the bowl for students to wash their hands. A silent prayer is said before they begin to eat. Friends like to sit together at one desk to eat and it is not unusual to see children trading part of their lunch. During the winter months the children often warm soup or toast sandwiches on the heating vents. On one of our visits, the students shared one of their orange watermelons with the researchers. The students thought it was funny that we had never seen an orange watermelon. The students have a lot of fruit and enjoy candy at each recess, however we never observed anyone chewing gum or eating during class. Each day's instructional schedule is found in Table 1.

As illustrated in Table 1, the curriculum consists of reading, spelling, English, geography, German, arithmetic, penmanship, and Bible Lessons. The students also prepare songs to sing for visitors and for the end of the year program. Textbooks for the above subjects are listed in Table 2 of the Appendix. The interview with the local public school superintendent indicated that this school has, on occasion, requested textbooks to augment the textbooks in use at their school.

Curriculum and Instruction

Instruction in math, spelling, and reading occurs by grades. For example, when the second grade students are receiving

instruction in arithmetic, all the other students in the school are working on individual assignments. A typical math lesson would have the students checking their individual work while standing in front of the class or remaining at their seats. The teacher then records each student's grade. If students are having problems with a certain concept, the teacher will have students work example problems at the board and then assign the next day's work. The teacher would then go through the same process with each of the remaining grades.

The teacher, students, bishop and parents agree that reading is the most important subject taught. Observing reading instruction in Old Order schools is like observing reading instruction in one room schools one hundred years ago, with students standing in the group in front of the class reading from their McGuffy Readers (Schroeder, 1977).

Reading instruction is part of each day's routine with grades 1-4 being scheduled early in the morning and grades 5-8 later in the morning. Similar techniques are used in each group with different emphasis dependent on the grade level of the group. Typical reading lessons are described below.

When the teacher says first grade reading, the students rise and file to the front of the room when the teacher says "pass". The students face the class and read from the text using bookmarks under the line being read. Students take turns reading one paragraph in a specified order which is understood by the children. Thus, the teacher does not have to pick who reads next or tell a student when to stop reading. At the end of the story the teacher asks several comprehension questions taken from the

text. The students answer the questions in turn and if a student does not know the answer the next person in line answers the question. After the students have returned to their seats the teacher uses flashcards to review phonics skills. Students then complete workbook pages which are a comprehension check of the story just completed. When they have completed their workbook, they practice silent reading of the story for the next day.

As grade two files to the front of the room, the teacher writes the vocabulary on the board. Students read as the first grade students did also using line markers. The story is a biblical one about Isaac, and it is apparent that the children have preread the story because they make few mistakes while reading. Comprehension questions are answered as in the first grade group and the students then complete workbooks and silently read the story for the next day.

The third grade reading group is conducted as above with the exception that one child having difficulty is aided by the teacher. Students in the other grades may take a break from their work to listen to the oral reading.

In grade four, markers are no longer used and there are very few oral reading errors. The teacher spends more time applying the biblical content of the story to their lives than in the earlier grades. There may also be some discussion of the artwork in the text. It is most obvious by grade four that students utilize a sing-song oral reading manner with very little intonation, although they do concentrate on projection. It was evident that students were pleased when they had read well,

although the teacher rarely praises a student verbally.

The reading passages in grades five through eight tend to be historical in content. The students orally read the story in front of the class as the earlier grades, however the students tend to try the word they do not know and go on with their reading rather than waiting for the teacher to provide the word for them. It is important to emphasize that the students spend a great deal of time reading silently in preparation for reading group and that most of the time in reading group is spent in the oral reading of the story.

Although some children require more help than others, it was apparent from their oral reading and answering of comprehension questions that most students were reading at grade level. Comprehension questions were primarily factual/literal (50%). Flashcards were used in grades 1-4 for phonics instruction, new words, and phrases. Games were rarely used, although in some classes competition was sparked by "trapping". This technique allows pairs of students to try to answer the same question. The first student to answer it correctly remains in the lead position or takes the lead position and is challenged by the next student. The children seemed to enjoy the game.

When the students are not in reading class, they spend most of their time working or reading individually. This observation is best exemplified in Table 3 which indicates that 65% of student time was spent working individually. In contrast, the students spend about 15% (categories 1-3) of their time in groups with the teacher. It should be noted that we never observed a student off-task in any of the small groups working with the

teacher. Also note that off-task behavior (categories 8-10) accounts for only 5% of the student behavior in the classroom and that students are out of their seats less than .01% of the time. In fact, we never witnessed anyone leave to use the outhouse, get a drink, or sharpen a pencil. Students do not leave their seat unless directed by the teacher during the class. It is very rare for students to be away from their desk for any reason. Students who finish their work do not waste time bothering others but rather take out a book to begin reading.

There are several reasons for not seeing anyone out of their seat. Students do not have a lot of trash because they do not have a lot of extra paper, nor do they complete a multitude of ditto sheets. For the trash they do accumulate, each student has a little bag tied to their desk in which they can deposit their trash. Each student has a place to keep extra pencils; most have a 2x4 piece of lumber in which holes have been drilled for their pencils. A communal supply of pencils is located in a 2x4 near the bookshelf. A student must ask permission to leave his/her seat if they need one of these pencils. Furthermore, when students finish their classwork they read. As indicated in Table 3, individual reading occurs 6% of the time.

It is also interesting to note that students take breaks from their work (9% of the behavior) to listen to recitation or reading of students in another grade. This most often occurs if the children recite something from memory, or hear a funny story. This serves as a source of review for older students and a taste of things to come for the younger students. It is interesting to

note that the students are reponsible enough to get back to work with no prompting from the teacher.

One might describe the work habits of the students in the school as automatic. That is, the students know what will happen next and they know when their work should be completed. This is illustrated in both Tables 3 and 4. Table 4, which is a summary of the verbal interaction in the classroom, indicates that the teacher spent only 5% of classroom verbal interaction to giving directions. Further the teacher spent less than .01% of verbal interaction praising or criticizing students both of which are possible ways to get students back on task. Thirty percent of the verbal interaction in the class consists of instructional statements, such as asking questions (7%) and lecturing (23%). In contrast 48% of the verbal interaction is attributable to the students. As indicated earlier, the students spend a great deal of in class time reading out loud, reciting from memory, or giving answers; the teacher does not intervene unless someone makes a mistake. Qualitative analysis indicated that students never had a discussion. Facts are presented and recited. Notice also that silence accounts for 16% of verbal interaction, a further indication that children work independently and that the responsibility of education is on them as students.

To reiterate, the class often seems to be running on automatic with very little verbal statements by the teacher to keep the children on task. The students know what their reponsibilities are and when they should be completed. Students on occasion receive small rewards for work well done, (such as a sticker), but for the most part positive reinforcement is not

used in this school. Students are expected to complete their work and to be intrinsically motivated. One must remember that being able to read both English and German is an important ability related to the Mennonite religious heritage. Peer tutoring is used very sparingly, and if it does occur it is usually an older student teaching a younger.

It is interesting to note that studies cited by Flanders and Simon (1969) indicate that 65 - 75% of the verbal interaction in the classroom is attributable to the teacher. The amount of teacher talk in this one room school (35%) is less than that indicated by Flanders and Simon. There are several reasons for this occurrence. The older students serve as role models for the younger students, therefore the teacher does not have to spend time giving directions. The teacher follows the same order for recitation each day, thus students do not need to be told whose turn it is or how much to read. There are very few instances of praise given to the pupils by the teacher.

Grading and Attendence

Students receive a report card every six weeks. To determine grades the teacher records a grade for every assignment the students complete. The students usually exchange papers and correct them as the teacher or students take turns reciting the answers. The students then tell the teacher the number wrong. The teacher then calculates the percentage correct, which is their grade. Grades are recorded for all assignments, and end of the unit tests also are used to determine report card grades.

From September 1986 to December 1987 there was a 96.6%

student attendance rate. This is very similar to that of a local public school which had a 95% attendance rate in the academic year 1986-87 and an attendance rate of 96% for the months of September through December of 1987. State regulations require that the school be in session 180 days each term. Students may not miss more than three days per term without a written excuse. Of the absences recorded in Table 5 only three are unexcused absences. These were due to hunting.

Students are required to attend school from grades 1-8. Once completing grade 8, the children learn skills needed to run a home and farm under the direction of their parents. On rare occasions, the oldest son may request a Farm Permit to leave school prior to completion of eighth grade if the parents are disabled. These appeals are directed to the local public school district's attendance officer.

Funding

Each family that sends children to the school is subject to a $500 fee per year. The tuition is payable in installments and is the same for each family no matter how many of their children attend the school. Only one of the families that sends their children to the school does not pay their tuition, which requires the church to make up the difference. This situation will not be cause to ask the children to attend school elsewhere. Other funds required to operate the school are supplied by the church which sponsors the school. The school refuses all federal funds. The local public school district continues to get a leader from the Mennonite community to sign a statement for each federal program indicating that they do not wish to receive federal funds.

The teacher's salary is $22 per day, which the teacher believes to be too high of a salary. Other teachers at similar schools in the area receive from $12 to $20 per day.

School Rules

Interviews of the parents, teacher, and bishop revealed the following rules of operation of the school, all of which are unwritten.

1. boys must wear hats to school
2. girls must wear dresses or skirts
3. the family may not own a television
4. students may not bring bikes onto the school property
5. swearing is forbidden
6. students are expected to participate in singing the religious songs selected by the teacher

Student Interviews

A content analysis of the student interviews which were conducted on Dec. 10, 1987 revealed several categories. First, the children were very satisified with their school. Second, they had not thought much about what they would be when they grew up, with the typical response for the boys being "I don't know." Most realized that they did not have much choice. As one girl indicated "a housewife, there is nothing else I can be." Furthermore, only two students indicated that they would like to be a teacher. The third category was parental involvement with the school. The students indicated that their parents visited the school about twice a year, which the children enjoyed. Most students indicated that their parents did not teach them schoolwork at home but they did learn how to milk or work in the fields.

Students completed a survey on the same day the student

interviews were conducted. The students' responses to the first two questions are found in Tables 5 and 6. All of the students in attendance that day completed one of the surveys. One student was absent that day and one student was going to school in Tennessee for the month of December.

Table 6 is a tabulation of the students' responses fo the question, "What is your favorite subject?" The language arts activities of reading, spelling, and English were picked as the favorite by 8 of the 12 students. Table 7 indicates that students' responses to the question, "What is your favorite book?" Two of the twelve students picked the Bible as their favorite book.

In response to the question, "How do you get to school?", 10 of 12 students indicated that they walk, one student rides in a car, and one student's father brings him. In response to question #4, "What is your favorite thing to do in your spare time?", ten of twelve students indicated reading, one student indicated helping the teacher check books, and one student indicated coloring. This result seems to confirm the observation that the students use their free time to read books in school.

Teacher Interview

During the several occasions that we spoke with the teacher, we obtained valuable information on the curriculum and instruction of the school. This served to verify our data from observations and clarify our understanding of the school. The teacher believes that the most important subject is reading. because as she said, "If they can't do that, they can't do anything." The teacher believes that the most difficult part of

the job is discipline, which the researchers did not see to be a problem. She believes that her biggest joy in teaching is working with the children and she enjoys reading and writing in her diary during her spare time. She was positive about the school and appreciated the help of the parents.

Parent Interviews

Visiting the children's homes and talking with the parents provided insight into the structure of the family and the educational expectations of the parents. A content analysis of these interviews reveals several categories. First the parents are involved with the school in four ways.

1. Each family pays a tuition fee of $500 per year regardless of the number of children who attend the school.
2. Parents visit the school two or three times per year. Although parents may visit at any time, they usually come to school for a special program at the end of the year and for the child's birthday.
3. Although the church maintains the building, some of the parents help clean the school in preparation for opening in September. The children clean the school on a weekly basis.
4. Some families donate firewood to the school.

The parents we interviewed agreed that reading, writing and arithmetic are important skills for the students to acquire. They also want their children to learn respect for others and "to be content with what they have." The Old Order Mennonite families we visited expressed the need for their children to continue the farming tradition, to marry and have traditional homes.

One family visited, which was not Old Order Mennonite, expressed a desire for their children to learn a skill or trade. They also felt that it was important that they learn to live peacefully with respect for others.

The parents were asked if their children liked going to school. In each case they said yes. In one home it was a quick positive response; in another there was a yes, some hesitation and then "but they like some things better than others." When asked what they liked the parent responded with a smile, "the outdoor activities."

The parents were also asked what they liked most about the school. It was noted that the school had had other teachers but they felt that the current teacher was a good one. They appreciated that the school taught respect for others and God, and they were pleased that the children memorized scripture and poems. They felt that the emphasis on the basics was good and that it would serve their children well.

One family expressed gratitude that the school protected their children from the "temptations of the world." They felt that their children benefited from their school experience but saw no need for attending school beyond eighth grade.

The parents were unable to express any specific negatives about the school. However, one father saw no need for art, but the mother said she wished she had had art when she was in school. All the families were grateful to have this school for their children. This was particularly true of the family that was not Old Order Mennonite, who were very appreciative that their children could attend this school. Two of the six parents interviewed attended this same school as children.

Discussion

The observation and interviews conducted in this case study seem to point to one important aspect of this school, which is it's Mennonite heritage. The school building itself is humble and unpretentious. The textbooks are simple and non-worldy, which best suits the needs of this group. The teacher does not coax or rely on excessive positive reinforcement to get students on task, but allows the importance of reading and studying to guide the students. The students have time in school to read which furthers their enjoyment of reading. It is interesting to note that 33% of the students picked reading as their favorite subject, conversely Dewalt (1988) found that 1,042 public school students picked math as their favorite subject (42%) with reading being picked by only 13% of the students. The reading texts also implore the students to serve God and not man. Finally, the atmosphere in the school is more like a graduate school or seminary library, where students work independently to find answers and to reflect on these answers.

The Mennonite heritage and the historically grounded form of one-room teaching affects the school more than parental involvement. While the parents do visit the school and provide funds for its existence, it is the spirit of the Mennonite tradition which focuses the attention of students, parents and teacher to the importance of education in grades 1-8. This tradition stresses the need for skill in reading and writing in both English and German to understand their faith and to communicate among people, and for personal enjoyment. The

subjects of arithmetic and geography prepare the students with some of the skills necessary to manage a farm, learn a trade, and manage a home all of which are neccessary for the Mennonite culture.

Parental involvement in this school is not greater or lesser than that of most public schools. The parents of the school understand the need for education of their children in terms of their religious beliefs, ability to function in our society, and the skills needed for jobs. The difference is that the public schools do not have a motivating force which binds parents, students and teachers together to focus on the importance of education. As Sher (1983) indicates, the consolidation of the public schools has served to make them larger, but less often the focus of the community at large.

A second implication is related to what some critics believe to be a problem with public education. The school in this study instills the idea that hard work is necessary, but enjoyable. It prepares its students for the life of labor which most learn at an early age. Students are expected to work at school and as such the students do not expect to be entertained by the teacher as do many public school students. Thus, this study says to parents and educators that we should address the issue of instilling a work ethic within our children.

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Table 1

Daily Instructional Schedule

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
Arithmetic 5-8	Reading 1-4	Reading 1-4
Arithmetic 1-4	Arithmetic 5-8	Arithmetic 5-8
Recess	Recess	Recess
Vocabulary 5-8	Arithmetic 1-4	Arithmetic 1-4
Phonics 1-2	Reading 5-8	German 6-8
Lunch and Recess	Lunch and Recess	Lunch and Recess
Geography 3-8	English 1-8	Phonics 1-2
Recess	Recess	German 3-5
Spelling 1-8	Spelling 1-8	Geography 3-8

Thursday	Friday
Reading 1-4	Reading 1-4
Arithmetic 5-8	Bible Lessons 5-8
Recess	Recess
Arithmetic 1-4	Penmanship 1-8
Reading 5-8	Art 1-8
Lunch and Reces	Lunch and Recess
English 1-8	Spelling 1-8
Spelling 1-8	Recess
	Cleaning

Table 2

Textbooks Used in the School

Reading:
Grades 1-4 use reading books published by Rod and Staff Publishers in Crockett Kentucky.
Grades 5-8 use reading books published by Pathway Publishers in Alymer Ontario. A workbook entitled Working With Words by Pathway Publishers is also used.

Spelling:
Grades 1-8 a variety of used public school textbooks published prior to 1974.

Geography:
Used public school social studies textbooks published prior to the 1960's.

Arithmetic:
Math Textbook series entitled Practical Mathematics by Strayer & Upton of Columbia University (1934) which is reprinted by the Gordonville Print Shop, Gordonville, PA (these books have no pictures and are filled with problems). Arithmetic workbooks also published by the Gordonville Print Shop.

German:
Grades 1-4: Let's Read German. Pathway Publishers.
Grades 5-8: Testament (Bible) Martin Luther's original translation, Dickinson Brothers Inc. Grand Rapids, Michigan Truth for Life. Rod and Staff Publishers.

Penmanship:
Grades 1-8: Penmanship. School Supply Room. Gordonville Print Shop. Gordonville, PA 17529.

Table 3

Student Classroom Behavior

Category	%
1. Listening to Lesson	9%
2. Hand Raised	2%
3. Talking (Class Related)	3%
4. Working on Assignments	65%
5. Reading	6%
6. Listening to Another Group	9%
7. Talking (non-class related)	1%
8. Out of Seat	>.01%
9. Other (daydreaming)	4%
10. Throwing Objects or Fighting	0%

Categories 1-3 were only recorded when students are in the group with the teacher.

Table 4

Classroom Verbal Interaction

Category	%
1. Accepts Feeling	>.01%
2. Praises or Encourages	>.01%
3. Accepts or uses Student Idea	>.01%
4. Asks Question	7%
5. Lectures	23%
6. Gives Direction	5%
7. Criticizes or Justifies Authority	>.01%
8. Student Response to Teacher	30%
9. Student Initiates Conversation	18%
10. Silence	16%
11. Confusion	0%
1 - 7 Teacher Verbal Statements	36%
8 - 9 Student Verbal Statements	48%

Table 5

Enrollment and Student Attendance

Month	Enrollment	# of Absences	% of Attendance
September 1986	20	3	99.3
October	20	5	98.9
November	20	9	97.5
December	20	25	94.0
January 1987	20	20	95.5
February	20	3	99.3
March	20	46*	89.5
April	20	30*	93.2
May	20	5	97.7
September	17	6	98.4
October	17	4	98.9
November	14	7	97.4
December	14	8	97.2

* indicates that there was an epidemic of chicken pox

Table 6

Student Responses to the Question, What is your favorite subject?

Subject	Frequency	%
Reading	4	33%
Art	2	17%
Spelling	2	17%
English	2	17%
Recess	1	8%
Help Mom and Dad	1	8%

Table 7

Student Responses to the Question, What is your favorite book?

Book	Frequency	%
Bible	2	17%
Math book	2	17%
English book	2	17%
Library books	2	17%
Spelling book	1	8%
Hardy Boys series	1	8%
Chesapeake Charlie	1	8%
Reading book	1	8%

Table 8

Questions Which Were Answered by the Students During Individual Interviews

1. What do you like best about school?
2. What don't you like about school?
3. What do you want to be when you grow up?
4. Would you like to be a teacher?
5. How often do your parents visit the school?
6. Do you like to have your parents visit the school?
7. Do your parents teach you at home?

Table 9

Questions Which Were Answered by the Parents During the Interviews

1. How are you involved with the school?
2. What do you want your children to learn in school?
3. What is the most important value or goal you have for your child?
4. What values should the school teach?
5. What would you like to see your children doing as adults?
6. What do you like most about your child's school?
7. What do you like least about your child's school?
8. Do your children like going to school?

Figure 1. Floorplan of the School

LEGEND:

1. Blackboard
2. Teacher's Desk
3. Bookshelves
4. Table
5. Student' Desks
6. Book Cabinet
7. Seat
8. Coats
9. Vestibule
10. Boots and Lunches